

In this module we look at health, including physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing. We examine expectations of what is considered healthy across different cultures and discover the ways in which newcomers strive to maintain healthy lifestyles. We reflect on the support that Canada's health care system can provide to newcomers while recognizing the barriers they may encounter while trying to access services. This module acknowledges the importance of being sensitive to past lived experiences, religious beliefs and economic situation in order to respond to newcomers' emotional and physical needs.

In the featured videos, participants reflect upon stressful situations during their journey to Canada or soon after their arrival. We hear about the malnutrition experienced by a Hungarian refugee in Yugoslavia in the 1950s, and the inhospitable conditions of the various camps that her family stayed in before coming to Canada. A son describes the physical and emotional toll that running a convenience store took on his retired parent as they dealt with challenges such as long hours and repeated robberies.

The videos reveal the importance that faith, creativity and exercise have in maintaining healthy and balanced lifestyles. Through the creation of an artist book, one participant uses cuts, darts and stitches in the cloth as metaphors to represent the lived experience of women. A newcomer from Iran describes an important symbol from his faith tradition, and how it offers a model for living. Two participants describe how their involvement in CultureLink's Bike Host program has allowed them to become comfortable bicycling in Toronto, building their physical fitness and their social networks which offer emotional support.

Discussion Questions

1. As a newcomer, do any of the stories featured in this module resonate with your own experience? Why or why not?
2. What sports are popular in Canada? What role does sport play in shaping cultural identity?
3. What creative pursuits are popular in Canada? Why is it important to foster creativity in our society?
4. What challenges exist at different life stages that can affect personal well-being? What environmental factors can affect health? How can these challenges be overcome?
5. Write a list of ten attributes that relate to your personal definition of health. Compare your list with other members of the group. Do you notice any patterns based on ethnicity, gender or age?
6. What role does religion play in shaping policies and practices in Canadian society?

Related Resources

Access to health services:

The Government of Canada's Citizenship and Immigration offers information on Canada's public health insurance as well as information about the Interim Federal Health Program which provides limited, temporary coverage to people from certain groups (including refugees) who aren't eligible for provincial or territorial health insurance.

www.cic.gc.ca/ENGLISH/newcomers/after-health.asp

www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/outside/summary-ifhp.asp

Health Care Connect helps you find a doctor or nurse practitioner in Ontario.

www.ontario.ca/page/find-family-doctor-or-nurse-practitioner

Health Care Options helps you to find options for health care services in your area.

www.ontario.ca/locations/health/

General services and information:

Access Alliance offers primary health care, illness and disease prevention, health education services, and community health and wellness programs for immigrants and refugees living in Toronto. LGBTQ+ and youth focused programs are offered.

accessalliance.ca

The Canadian Centre for Refugee and Immigrant Health Care is a health and dental charity driven by volunteer health professionals dedicated to ensuring all refugees and immigrants to Canada receive care without judgement or ability to pay. Their Tuesday and Thursday evening clinics offer General, Wound, and Diabetic Care as well as a Vaccine Program to people without an OHIP card.

healthequity.ca

This Global News article offers an explainer about Canada's health care for refugees and links to more information.

globalnews.ca/news/2363664/whats-the-deal-with-refugee-health-care-a-brief-explainer

The Council for Canadians with Disabilities is a national human rights organization of people with disabilities working for an inclusive and accessible Canada.

www.ccdonline.ca

The Canadian Association of the Deaf (CAD) represents the interests of Deaf individuals in Canada at the national level.

cad.ca

CNIB provides community-based support, knowledge and a national voice to Canadians who are blind or partially sighted.

cnib.ca

Related Resources, continued

Mental health:

The Multicultural Mental Health Resource Centre (MMHRC) seeks to improve the quality and availability of mental health services for people from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, including immigrants, refugees, and members of established ethnocultural communities.

www.multiculturalmentalhealth.ca

COSTI offers Counselling (Generic and specialized counselling for women and families experiencing abuse), Mental Health Services and Therapeutic Groups and Workshops (Women's Depression Group and a Partner Abuse Response Program) for newcomers and immigrants. Many programs cater specifically to Italian-Canadians.

www.costi.org

The South Asian Women's Centre offers weekly Tamil, Hindi and Punjabi groups for women experiencing stress, isolation and/or depression. The program is offered in partnership with Canadian Mental Health Association.

www.sawc.org/programs-services

The Canadian Centre for the Victims of Torture (CCVT) offers a variety of support groups, counselling services, crisis intervention services and coordinated professional services.

www.ccvvt.org

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health offers information, resources and support for those suffering from Posttraumatic Stress Disorder.

www.camh.ca/en/hospital/health_information/a_z_mental_health_and_addiction_information/Post-traumatic/Pages/pstd.aspx